

## BOOK REVIEW.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF TROPICAL WOODY VEGETATION-TYPES. Dr. J. Burt Davy. Imperial Forestry Institute paper No. 13. Oxford. 2s. 6d. 1938.

The naming of vegetation types has long been a bone of contention amongst ecologists and geographers and differences of opinion are so great that one often finds it necessary to discover the "school" to which a worker belongs before settling down to digest his contribution.

Here we have, however—from the pen of an old friend of South African Botany—a straightforward attempt, intelligible to all, to combine in one review a "synonymy," as it were, of the names in use amongst Forest Officers in the British tropical possessions, and to suggest, with a view to stabilisation, those terms which should be retained.

On the whole it is a successful work and allows one to class the several vegetation types with some ease.

Some of the names suggested for retention are, perhaps, not altogether as suitable, on theoretical grounds, as one might have wished, but there is no question of their practical usefulness.

In discussing the various systems propounded we are a little disappointed to find Dr. F. E. Clements' "Plant Succession, an analysis of the Development of Vegetation" dealt with so briefly, on the grounds that it is "largely an exposition of the phenomena of succession." In our experience it is not infrequently the case that adjacent climaxes (types) can only be adequately distinguished by a careful consideration of the successional stages leading to their development. In any case this brief treatment is paradoxical in view of the attention given to Champion's "Preliminary Survey of the Forest Types of India and Burma."

To our view the difficulties which, from the theoretical, rather than the practical, point of view these suggested names for retention present, will only be resolved when vegetation types are defined in terms more of climate and less of the plants constituting them.

Thus the word "tropical" is used here without definition as to whether "within the tropics" or "tropical climate" is intended.

For instance "Tropical Montane Forest" is used to describe a vegetation type, which, in our view, develops in a temperate climate resulting in this case from elevation in the tropics. The term "Temperate Evergreen Forest" where temperate connotes climate and not locale would be, we think, a better term.

Similarly Tropical Savanna-woodland is excellent provided the term has a climatic and not local significance. Otherwise fresh difficulties will be introduced by this system for extra-tropical (here used geographically) vegetation—notably our own north-eastern Transvaal Mopane country.

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